

The TURQUOISE...

Story of the Mining of the Beautiful Stone, New Mexico's Native Gem, which Rivals the Blue of Her Azure Skies

The largest turquoise mine in the world is situated in the Burro mountains in New Mexico. It is called the Azure mine. From Persia comes turquoise of fine color and exquisite polish, but no single mine in the Asiatic country has produced gems of a finer grade nor in such abundance as have been taken from this one mine in New Mexico. Turquoise are found in Colorado, Nevada, Alabama, California and Arizona, but the mines of New Mexico furnish the trade in the United States with more than two-thirds of its wares, because it is there that the purest gems have been found within the last 25 years.

The turquoise has been used as an ornamental gem from the beginning of historic time, and to many the finding of stone implements near old workings of turquoise property is conclusive proof of its use in prehistoric days. The Mohammedans used polished blue stones in their buildings of worship; the Peruvians ornamented their temple of the sun with the gem and in one of the principal halls of justice in the old royal palace of Tezcuco, in Mexico, was found a throne of pure gold inlaid with turquoise. The Indian name for turquoise, "chalchihuitl," was given to a mountain near Santa Fe, N. M., where the stone is still found. The archives of Santa Fe record the chalchihuitl grant bearing the date of 1763, and a broad traveled road leading from Santa Fe by way of Silver City, N. M., to the City of Mexico would appear to indicate that many of the gems used for ornament in the royal palaces of the Aztecs were brought from the Cerrillos and Burro mountains near the cities named.

Mined by Prehistoric Men.
The mining of turquoise in these places was undoubtedly carried on long before the Spaniards came to America. Immense depressions indicating excavations, and old dumps, where relics of the age of stone implements are found, constitute the proof.

Hammer heads of flint, bearing grooves for the binding on of handles with which to wield these clumsy implements, coiled pottery of the oldest known type, are found near these old workings. The method of the prehistoric workers was crude and slow. With the hammers weighing from one to 20 pounds, the stone was patiently chipped away. There are some slight indications which would lead to the belief that fires were made upon the rocks and water thrown upon the hot rock in order to crack it, and thus release the turquoise, but this theory lacks proof, since the fire markings cannot prove their own antiquity.

In the Burro mountains, near Silver City, N. M., many such old implements have been found, proving that the stones were polished where they were produced by rubbing them upon sandstone of graduated sorts from the coarse grain to the finest. Small stones of the shape that is readily fitted into the hand, are found with highly polished grooves of perfect curved shape, showing the final perfection of the gems by hand.

Mining the Gems.
In the order of their modern discovery the locality of the New Mexico turquoise mines is as follows: Los Cerrillos, Santa Fe county; Burro mountains, Grant county; Hachiti, Grant county, and the Jarilla mountains in Otero county.

The mines which have produced the finest gems are in the Burro mountains near Silver City, where the largest turquoise mine in the world, the Azure mine, is located.

It is said that the appearance of turquoise rings on the Indian chains thereabouts was the first indications to the modern masters of the land that turquoise could be found in the vicinity of Cook's peak. Cook's peak was Geronimo's stronghold, and the Apache Indians raged over the Santa Rita's, the Mogollones, the Burro mountains and the Black range. Their pottery, ornaments and weapons are found everywhere. Almost every chain picked up or bought from the Indians contains at least two secret messages. One comes in the form of numerous shells which speak of the day when the southwest country was under water, and the other in bright polished blue beads which have no counterpart save in the gem turquoise. So the old time miners reasoned that these bits of azure stone promised other such in the vicinity and they reasoned well.

The entrance into the Azure mine is a tremendous cut, 1,000 feet long, 60 feet across the bottom, 150 across the top and 75 feet deep.

Turquoise mines are not worked with precision or rule, as the precious

stone is variable in its occurrence. Sometimes one blast of dynamite will open a pocket of valuable stone. And again 100 feet or more will be worked without discovering one bit of stone of commercial value.

Gems Worth \$5,000,000 in One Pocket

Turquoise of the finest color and hardness is more rare than the diamond of the same grade. In the whole city of New York probably not 20 pieces of perfect turquoise could be found. It is not on the market. Small pieces may be hoarded by the dealers, but on the whole, the deep azure blue turquoise is not often seen, because it cannot be found.

It has been 12 or more years since the famous Elizabeth pocket was found in the Azure mine. The turquoise found in this pocket occurred near the surface and was of a blue equaling any ever found in Persia and finer than any ever found in America. It was sold at \$20 a carat wholesale. It is estimated that the Azure company sold the Elizabeth turquoise for no less than \$5,000,000. It would have broken the market to produce this quantity of flawless gems at one time and without doubt the stone was carefully hoarded by the dealers in New York and gradually put upon the market. Very little of this grade of turquoise can be bought at this time. The company retains a few pieces for show purposes but it openly admits that not since that time has turquoise of such high grade been discovered in their mine.

The turquoise is found in seams, pockets, lenses and nuggets. The finest turquoise is usually found in nugget form, a lump of bright blue imbedded in the mother stone.

The interior of a turquoise is not without beauty. The veins of blue in the porphyry setting, with here and there a green lense a deep blue spot on a paler blue surface, a long blue penciling on an otherwise barren gray wall, a mass of fairly good blue cut into a pillar—the varying shades and surprising form lend a continual enchantment and efficient lure to the seeker after true blue.

Much turquoise fades very rapidly a short time after being exposed to the air, and is, of course, comparatively valueless. Water is so inherently a part of turquoise that a prolonged immersion in the fluid will recharge the gems with the desirable dark blue color, but the effect is lasting. Other qualities of the stone are affected by light and most of them must be kept some time, years preferably, in order to test their color retaining capacity.

Many gem experts have made a study of the possibility of deepening the color of the gems. Naturally, a fortune awaits the chemist who will succeed in changing the pale blue and green stones to a changeless deep blue. So far the efforts along that line have not been successful, and possibly the reason is that no stone can be so easily imitated as the turquoise. A good imitation turquoise cannot be discovered save by a gem expert—one accustomed to the handling of the polished stone. The made turquoise may attain the perfect color and be made capable of a higher polish than that produced by any but the finest gems.

Value of Turquoise Matrix.

The turquoise is chipped out of the rock and picked up in nuggets as it occurs from the blast. It is dumped into a car and hauled to the long Santa Fe cut, where it is left in the open air. After something of a fresh air test, it is chipped clean of porphyry and graded, when it is shipped to New York.

The production of the turquoise matrix is given as much study as the flawless gem. There are three kinds of turquoise matrix, that which is veined with iron; that which is half rock and half turquoise (clearly defined); and that which is mottled—a darker blue spot on a lighter blue background, or vice versa. This latter kind is often very beautiful, and sells for \$1.25 a carat, wholesale. The price is in remarkable contrast to the flawless Elizabeth grade which sold at \$20 a carat wholesale. The mottled turquoise matrix is generally found to contain about 50 per cent pure turquoise. It has had a remarkable vogue the past several years for use as broches and other personal ornaments. Second grade turquoise is much used for a cheaper grade of ornaments, and usually sells at from 50 to 75 cents a carat. The gems are so incrustated with stone that often 50 per cent of the gem is lost in the cutting.

Turquoise has a use quite aside from its setting as a gem. Its decorative value is unquestioned and when the stone is very hard it is capable of

fine workmanship. Turquoise inlaid with other precious stones was greatly valued by the ancients, and a few beautiful instances of their art remain.

Mr. Rothschild of London, many years ago came into possession of a single exquisite turquoise vase. It was about six inches high and reputed to have come from Persia. The color of the vase was the deepest blue and it showed a brilliant polish. Mr. Rothschild earnestly desired to have a companion vase to match the Persian production, and for many years searched in vain for a sufficiently large piece of the gem to produce a similar deep blue vase. It is said that he had men searching in Persia many years and finally turned to America as a last resort. After searching through the various turquoise producing properties, one of Mr. Rothschild's men finally came to Silver City, where he heard of the old Indian workings. One day a Mexican came into town from the Burros with a lump of turquoise wrapped in a gunny sack. He offered it for sale and the London agent examined the gem indifferently and finally bought it for a song. He had found his prize at last, and he bore it away to London before the Mexican had time to discover that he had thrown away what would have meant to him a fortune. But Mr. Rothschild has a pair of vases now, and one came from Persia and the other from New Mexico—a perfect match, yet they were produced at opposite ends of the earth.—Kansas City Star.

Maxwell City

We are having quite a cold wave here today.

Miss Bessie Jackson spent a few days the first of the week visiting friends in Raton.

John Sikens and G. Vander Hey were business visitors to Raton, Friday and Saturday.

Miss Ivy Whitely is spending a few days at the Geo. Littrell ranch, the guest of Miss Florence.

Meritt McMath of Raton came down Friday and stayed till Sunday with Abe and Jeff Jackson.

Mrs. Geo. Littrell came in from the ranch Monday and went to Raton to spend some days visiting.

A. P. Whiteley, J. J. Heringa and John Whiteley drove over to Cimarron Monday, returning Wednesday.

Mrs. Rease Stubblefield spent Tuesday and Wednesday at her father's ranch on the Vermejo, Mr. Littrell accompanied her home for a few days, hoping the change would be beneficial, for he has been suffering from rheumatism.

A. S. Rogers came in yesterday with sixty head of cows and calves that he bought at Cimarron, from Will Vance. Mr. Rogers has lost a few yearlings from what he supposes to be black leg.

Most all of the farmers on the Red River Ditch have been planting out—hubberty, small fruits, shade and fruit trees during the past week, but as yet have no water for the river is low.

J. A. Tinsley, from the Agricultural station at Mesilla, New Mexico, came up Wednesday, and is out at the Glidden ranch giving instructions as to the best methods of farming here.

E. R. Manning, wife and little daughter, Arline, returned Saturday, from a visit of several weeks at Lincoln, Nebr. Mr. Manning has shipped in a fine horse, which he purchased while away.

J. A. Krannawitter was taken seriously ill Sunday night, and Dr. Hopkins of Springer, was called. He is much better and is overseeing the work at the depot, but will not attempt to take full charge of the work for some days yet.

Mrs. Alvin Ash has been in Maxwell part of this week, she has gone out to their ranch to look after business affairs, and will visit with friends Raton before returning to her home in Texas.

John Heringa and family returned to Maxwell last Friday and have taken up their residence in their former home, after an absence of almost two months at Ft. Collins, Colo. Mr. Heringa has sold his Racket store in Ft. Collins to O. P. Pesmen and bought the Pesman ranch near here. People who have lived here ten or fifteen years most always come back.

DIXIE.

BIDS FOR GRADING

Miners Hospital Grounds

Will be received at the office of A. R. Streicher, Secretary, until 12:00 Monday, April 15th, 1907, for full particulars call at the office of A. R. Streicher, Mendelson Bldg. 420

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Bring in Your Samples

A. T. McIntyre, president of the Deep Tunnel Mining and Milling company of Elizabethtown, is collecting ore to place in cabinets to be placed in the depots at Raton. The following letter to the Prospector explains the matter quite fully:

Elizabethtown, N. M.,
February 14, 1907.

Red River Prospector,
Red River, N. M.

Dear Sir: I am collecting mineral specimens from Elizabethtown and Red River, to be placed in cabinets, one at Santa Fe depot and one at the St. Louis, Rocky Mountain & Pacific depot in Raton, to advertise the Red River and Elizabethtown mining districts. If the miners of Red River will donate specimens, labeled, showing what property they are from, they will be placed in the cabinet just as they are labeled. Please bring or send them to A. T. McIntyre, and leave at the postoffice in Elizabethtown. Hoping the people will see the good of this and respond quickly, I am yours truly,

A. T. MCINTYRE.

Any ore left at the News and Press office in Cimarron, or handed to Arthur O'Sullivan, will be forwarded to Mr. McIntyre.

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